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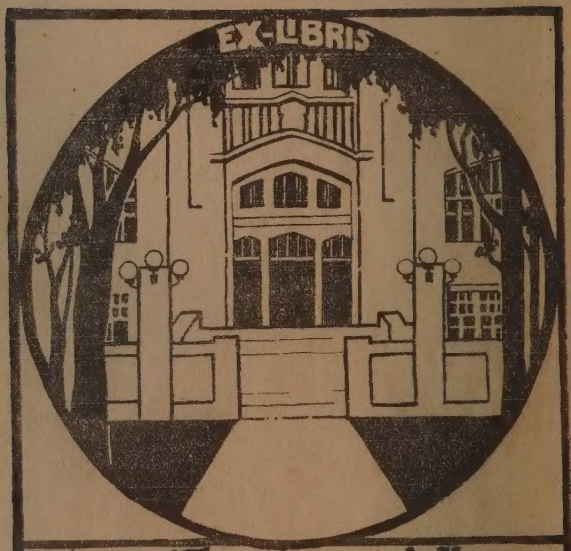

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PERPETUAL LIGHT

BENET WILLIAM ROSE

PERPETUAL LIGHT

"Ah, do not turn to me that face which is no longer of this world! . . . There are enough angels to serve the mass in Heaven! Have pity on me, who am only a man without wings, who rejoiced in this companion God had given me, and that I should hear her sigh with her head resting on my shoulder! . . . the bitterness like the bitterness of myrrh . . . And for you age is already come. But how hard it is to renounce when the heart is young!"

"THE TIDINGS BROUGHT TO MARY"

PERPETUAL LIGHT

A Memorial.

BY

WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

. . that we may be able to arrive
with pure minds at the festival
of perpetual light. Through the
same Christ our Lord. Amen.
Oremus.

NEW HAVEN
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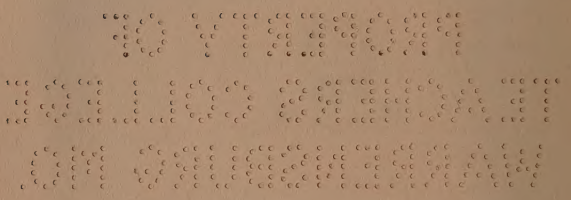

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DEDICATION

TO KATHLEEN AND MARGARET

Think of no verse when you read this,
But think of her alone
And her enduring benefice,
Sunlight on stone.

For day is stone and night is stone
Save she has made them bright,
Now she knows all that may be known
Of day and night.

Courage like hers we have from her,
Strength to be straight and brave,
And noble memories that recur
And heal and save.

By her clear eyes, by her pure brows,
We take the Sign,
And kneel within her Father's house—
And yours and mine.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The first eleven poems in the section entitled, "Before," originally appeared in my first volume, "Merchants from Cathay," published by the Century Company. This volume is now out of print and I hold the copyright. The three poems following these originally appeared in my second volume, "The Falconer of God and Other Poems." For permission to reprint a few of the remaining poems I have to thank the editors of *Reedy's Mirror, The Bang, The Lyric, The Madrigal,* The Sun Dial (*New York Evening Sun*), *Everybody's Magazine, The Century Magazine,* and "Books and the Book World" (*New York Sunday Sun*). For the group, "The Long Absence," in the section entitled, "After," I owe thanks to *The Yale Review.*

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FOREWORD

TERESA FRANCES THOMPSON, who also bore my name by marriage, died on January 26, 1919. This verse is published to her memory, because I wish to keep together the poetry she occasioned and enable those who loved her—and they were a great many—to know definitely what she was to me.

I think that is the truth. This is the only means I have at present of acknowledging publicly the vast debt I owe to her.

As I turn these poems over—if they are even to be called poems—I realize that they can never begin to express what her personality was. The earliest ones were written by a boy who was in love, and the latest by a man who has suddenly stepped into the dark. Those between are fragments from the days when we were struggling along together at the everyday tasks and outside interests and dreams that possessed us. The war entered our lives to change them in September, 1917. The poem, "Man Possessed," was written within sound of her actual voice, the others all in absence from her at various times and in moods made strange by absence.

And yet this is all I have at present to give in her memory. But I hold by these because—though they are poor, freakish fragments as far as any real expression of her is concerned—they were made for her.

It is even harder to express in bald prose a personality that had so many sides, so many varying strengths, such inner sight and yet such a forthright splendid intelligence. I have tried once to round it into periods—and have destroyed the attempt. It is my hope that the sister to whom she was devoted with an attachment altogether unusual to most of us will write of her.

If I merely recount the outlines of her life, it loses her. To say that her girlhood was given up to an intense and whole-souled devotion to the life of Christ as taught by the Roman Catholic Church will not even trace the outlines of that great spiritual adventure. But there, in the word "adventure," is a dim ideograph of what she found in life. Every day was an adventure to her with the hope of accomplishing something over and above mere routine and the pursuit of pleasure. And she used to say to me that her life had simply been a series of experiments into which she had put her whole heart, and in which she had always failed. But, of course, she never failed.

She wrote me while I was stationed at Washington:

"I am so very glad of your Sunday experience. I wish that I might have shared it with you, but I almost did, since we were at Mass there and walked across that green together. . . . No one else might be impressed by it, but you *know*. When I first thought of a convent I was about sixteen, and I did not go until I was twenty-one. During that time I had the habit of pretending when I went to sleep that I was lying full-length in a convent chapel before a dark altar, with its tiny light. When I went to the Little Sisters, with all its strange-

ness and homesickness and wrench away from everything, I was sustained by the knowledge that our bedroom on the third floor was across a wide hall from a rose window that looked right down into the Chapel. The dormitory had windows out into the hall, French fashion, so that when I opened the one at the head of my bed I was doing just what I had so often planned. You cannot imagine how personal it seemed to me.

"Then years after when I was in the Carmelite convent in London, it began to snow. I stood at a window looking out at the snow upon the roofs, and began to think (as you would have in my place), "Deep on the convent roofs the snows are sparkling to the moon,"—and suddenly I realized that it was St. Agnes Eve, and that long ago, when I was perhaps fifteen or sixteen, I had prayed that I might be a Carmelite nun in England. It was a thrill. No one else knew it. No one else could possibly have brought either of those two things about but Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever."

And she wrote me later:

"We will make a go of it together—I have been just where you are several times in my life. There is no denying that it hurts like the mischief, but there is something carried away out of it that the people who don't go through with it do not have. When I came back from the Little Sisters, after affirming and reaffirming (to strengthen my own resolution) that I was never coming back, I had to face just the same old world, and the same streets and people. Then, after the earthquake, I left Paul Elder's to go out to the settlement in the

Mission. I was full of faith in it, to work among the poor, without the fetters of a convent, to plan a new way in which Catholic girls could dedicate themselves to the service of God, using the best of the Protestant and Catholic ideas both—and in three months I . . . had handed in a report which criticized the whole place severely—and my resignation. I do not know now how much was personal spite on my part and how far I was right. And back to the same old circle at Paul Elder's, with another bright bubble broken. Then came the Carmelites, which cost, I think, more than any, and I remember I so dreaded coming back to New York and facing everyone that I tried hard to get a position in London where women get $5.00 a week as trained librarians. So back again. Well, education as the world hands it out to us is a mighty expensive thing. You give so much of your heart's blood and get so little back in any tangible form, but 'youth shows but half' and we have not yet come to the harvesting years. We might as well sow hopes and plans and ambitions generously 'and stretch through time a hand to reap the far-off interest of tears.'"

And she said of the number 19 in her life, in the late fall of 1918:

"I was thinking a lot about life this morning, coming home from church. You know the 27th of November is Mother's anniversary . . . Today is the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, always a great Catholic Feast . . . Father's birthday was the 23rd of December, he was buried on Christmas day—their wedding anniversary was December 31st—my birthday is January first,

J—'s the seventh, Mother's the fifth. So the whole season is full of memories, churches, masses, prayers, associations. And it struck me as strange that this New Year's finishes another half of my life. I was nineteen that winter. This year I shall be just twice that. Nineteen years were all childhood, dreaming, planning, hoping, aspiring, but with no practical care, no responsibilities of any sort, the most sheltered existence a girl could have. And now nineteen of as varied an experience as most people know, teaching, housekeeping, bringing up the younger children, seven years of Paul Elder's, the settlement house, travel, London, Rome, Paris, New York, the two convents in Chicago and London, extreme poverty, self-support, comfortable, moderate means, as you and I had, luxury such as this and the months with E—, six years a wife, five years a mother when J—'s birthday rounds it out,—the earthquake, which we thought transcended in size and importance anything that would ever happen to us, and then our little share of the tragedy of the war. Nineteen full years, n'est-ce pas? And now we start a new life, thank God, together."

She wrote me earlier, in 1917, while I was waiting to be called to a Southern training camp:

"I plan a home some day of the most Spartan simplicity, all our needs cut down to the lowest and plainest of possessions, and yet a spirit of hospitality, of contentment, of gaiety, of self-reliance and mutual helpfulness. Books and bookshelves. . . .

And of the Army:

"It so often makes me think of the religious orders.

The combination of the most heroic impulses with the most commonplace drudgery. The extraordinary fluctuations of feeling, thinking at one time that it is the only thing in the world to do . . . and then the feeling, what am I doing this for, anyway, other people do not find it necessary . . . As one nun said to me, 'You do not have to accept a Carmelite vocation—but, you have to either accept or refuse it.' The choice is laid before everyone, but once it is, all the coward has to do is to stand aside."

This last illustrates how she always saw the necessities of those she loved in terms of the spirit. Napoleon is reported to have said of Jesus Christ: "He speaks from the soul as never man spoke; the soul is sufficient for him, as he is sufficient for the soul."

So she thought. And her letters contain many quotations she formed her life by:

"God himself is Truth, Charity, and Purity, and the three things he hates most are deceit, cruelty, and impurity."

"God make us all saints!"

And the characteristic ending of a letter, with her full name always signed, such as:

"Lord, grant us in this world knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to come life everlasting.

TERESA."

But it is impossible to convey what her ways were with the children and in the several homes that she made so full of dreaming light. She had a keen appreciation of the humorousness and quaintness of children. She

was always quoting to me their adventures, their sayings. She had countless plans and schemes for work in the world, and carried out many of them in relation to woman suffrage, baby clinics, camp-fire organization for the girls of our village, and, during the war, work with all the local organizations among women that it called into being where she was living at the time. She wanted to start a home in America for French widows and orphans, though this plan was not possible,—she was deeply interested in the work for the protection of young girls under Miss Katharine Bement Davis, and only circumstances prevented her taking this up during the fall of 1918. She had several interviews with Miss Davis and showed herself to be the very person who could have helped greatly. Self-denial, sacrifice, poverty, effort were the watchwords ever recurring to her. Her instant concentration upon any book or paper that came under her eyes became a family joke. She would be lost immediately, oblivious of all surroundings. She read and thought with a lively appreciation of the many futilities in life and a desire to make her life count. She wasted no time on what did not at once attract her spirit, except of necessity. And yet she genuinely delighted in the small events of a day such as please and awe children. And the reason they loved her so was because they knew she brought the same guileless point of view to solve their bewilderment from larger experience. And yet she would write:

"I *wish* I knew where I stood. I was much happier when I was a rigid Catholic. I wish I could fit back

into that measure. Can I ever—any more than I can fit into the mental measure of a nun?"

And again her typewriting would exclaim to me:

"I don't like to write letters to you. I like to talk to you. I like still better to be silent with you!"

When she thought me in need of it she could be very self-forgetful:

"But I want to see the future big with Romance for you and I would rather feel you came home from voyages two weeks or two months long, with a trunkful of manuscripts; and that, three years from today, you had secured us special rates on a tramp steamer to Plymouth, than that you were going to dodge into subways the rest of your life."

"I would infinitely rather you shipped before the mast—to Bermuda, Borneo, or Buenos Aires. Don't think from this I don't want your face across the table from mine every night the rest of my life!"

Reading to the children, she would retail to me such incidents as:

"Then I read them the Gospel stories, . . . and they were too funny—R— trying to show me how Herod looked, and J— suggesting charitably that perhaps his wife was good. 'No,' said R—, 'the whole family was bad!' "

"In the spring I am going to take an old farmhouse, give the children one brown garment apiece, and plan a scheme of living that will leave something over for other children."

And this appealed to her:

"Well, if it is not in the Fall of 1918, it will be in

'one of those houses Our Lord is building' as J— remarks casually. Did I tell you of the little village in the North Carolina hills where H— and S. L— spent the summer, where the women raised enough sheep to cut the wool, card, and spin and weave the clothes the family wore?"

In the winter of 1914 she first visited Augusta, Georgia, where my father was stationed, and there the campaign against Child Labor, in which she was always vitally interested, became doubly real in necessity to her as she went through the cotton mills and saw conditions at close range. She always gave what sums she could to this cause. In 1915, perhaps the most famous year of the woman suffrage battle, she was campaigning, speaking, watching all day at the polls in her village of Port Washington, Long Island. I remember her speaking from the stage of the Republican Club against a clever anti-suffragist from New York. Her voice reached out for something in the hearts of her audience hid deeper than the appeal of a mere legislative reform. She knew her intellectual ground, but it was something deeper than intellectuality that went home.

In 1918 the Baby Welfare Movement was at its height. She became chairman of the Augusta committee and established clinics at the different schools and social centres.

So I grasp at her life, giving only a slight indication of how full it was. Her friends were of every type and kind, of every religious belief or lack of belief, of many different political opinions.

She hated war with her whole soul. It was directly

opposed to the words of Christ. But she wrote me in a dark time:

"Italy is bad, Russia is bad, Cambrai is bad. But those things are only phases in the eternal struggle of right against wrong. And the only thing that matters is to personally throw your whole life into the balance for the things you believe to be right."

How far I failed her! It is given to every man to fight somehow through the bewilderment of life with the best intentions he can realize. And life seems to me like a fierce current on which we are borne rather than anything we can really master—except by forgetting it. She has left me with the feeling that I must know infinitely more and try to understand better, and that we are governed most truly only by the inexplicable. "Meanwhile, there is our life here—Well?"

The verse in this book is put as nearly as possible in the order of its writing. If there is any merit in any line of it, the merit is of her making. If there is none, the effort was, at least, to reach higher than my grasp—because of her. A writer is—and it is the ancient curse!—an egotist. But it is not my grief that I wish to display here. The human heart can fortunately never be put on paper. Only—reality assures of reality. Poetry is unconscionable because it follows true conscience. I knew, in her, that conscience,—and know it in these fantastic shadows cast by her light. If you do also, be assured that the light still shines—forever.

New York City,
March 25, 1919.

BEFORE

THE SNARE OF THE FOWLER

Love, the wild fowler, spreads his nets with care,
And deep-toned warning both our hearts have heard,
Even as the old-time low-bell held each bird
Suddenly trembling, nestling pair by pair
Dark in the covert, till a blinding glare
Of torchlight and a clamorous shouted word
Dazed their bright eyes, and terrified wings upwhirred
To baffled blundering in the close-drawn snare.

So, dear, we cower at our warning bell.
Creep close to me, where shadows gird us round.
Fear we that wild revealment? Nay, not we!
"Ah, perilous play, to cross Love's stalking-ground!"
You whisper . . . yet our eyes, our eyes could tell
Of hearts that leap to meet their certainty!

THWARTED UTTERANCE

Why should my clumsy speech so fall astray,
To uncouth jargon of the every-day
Turn each fit word and phrase
  I treasured for your praise?

Discoveries I won to from afar,
All the rare things you are—nor know you are,—
In Orient offering
  I haste to you to bring.

I think to kneel and spread on cloths of dream
The beautiful, the priceless things you seem;
Perfume and precious stone,
  That you be shown your own.

Prince of my vision-palace, I would call
Your name through trumpets down its central hall,
And the rapt choral praise
  Before your dais raise;

And you should see, should hear, be glad and smile
That I so love you. Ah, but all the while
I may not show nor teach
  Save through my paupered speech!

THWARTED UTTERANCE

Beggar in guise, who am so rich at heart
Where you have set your pure white shrine apart
And keep your cherished state
  Dear and immaculate,

How should you know or hear me, when my tongue
Turns a dull rebel and doth ready wrong
To thoughts my dreams repeat?—
  Perhaps too proud, too sweet!

THE SONG OF HER

Thou art my singing and my voice,
Thy life the thing that I would sing,
Perfect past words of perfect choice,
A lovely and a lasting thing.
In every deed of thine, sweetheart,
The poetry of heaven has part
Beyond the gamut of all art,
Leaving me mute and marvelling.

Thy deeds like rhymes I have by heart,
Thy happy deeds of heavenly choice,
Deeds that rise rapt and shine apart
As echoes of a perfect voice
Rise and rejoice when voices sing,
Linger and ring—linger and ring
Till heaven is of their echoing
And all the heights of heaven rejoice.

Thou art the song that I would sing,
The purest song of purest art,
Till men stand mute for marvelling,
Aye, till the singing break Man's heart
Where sorrows glory to rejoice
In perfect notes of perfect choice
And strains of One deep, tender voice
Transfigured joys from sorrows start.

THE SONG OF HER

In all this world I have no choice.
If I would sing a lasting thing,
Thou art my singing and my voice.
Poor rhymes that earn no welcoming,
Rhymes that are nothing learned in art,
From heaven, from her, such worlds apart,—
Creep then unto her tender heart
And from her living learn to sing!

"ALWAYS I KNOW YOU ANEW"

I press my hands on my eyes
And will that you come to me.
Your semblances shimmer and rise;
Yet 'tis never your self I see,
Never the exquisite grace
And the bright, still flame of you.
So, when I meet you face to face,
Always I know you anew!

Faint visions I saw, instead
Of your brows direct and wise,
Of the little lilt of your head
And your dark-lashed, sky-clear eyes,
Of the soft brown braids demure,
The poise as of quiet light,
The perfect profile, sweet and pure,—
Never I dream you aright!

And new in endless ways,
By your blessed heart unplanned,
It is mine to surprise each sweeter phase,
Adore you, and understand;
For through every delicious change in you
Truth burns with a clear still flame;
And, though always I know you anew,
Always I find you the same!

THE RIVAL CELESTIAL

God, wilt Thou never leave my love alone?
Thou comest when she first draws breath in sleep,
Thy cloak blue night, glittering with stars of gold.
Thou standest in her doorway to intone
The promise of Thy troth that she must keep,
The wonders of Thy heaven she shall behold.

Her little room is filled with blinding light,
And past the darkness of her window-pane
The faces of glad angels closely press,
Gesturing for her to join their host this night,
Mount with their cavalcade for Thy domain.
Then darkness . . . but Thy work is done no less.

For she hath looked on Thee, and when on me
Her blue eyes turn by day, they pass me by.
All offerings—even my heart—slip from her hands.
She moves in dreams of utter bliss to be,
Longs for what nought of earth may satisfy.
My heart breaks as I clutch love's breaking strands.

I clutch—they part—to the wide winds are blown.
And she stands gazing on a cloud, a star,—
Blind to earth's heart of love where heaven lies furled.
God, wilt Thou never leave my love alone?
Thou hast all powers, dominions, worlds that are;
And she is all my world—is all my world!

THE TAMER OF STEEDS

Beyond this world where skies are free from stain,
Where brilliant flowers blow in open meads,
I heard the drumming hoofs of many steeds
Raise maddening music from a grassy plain.
They passed, with snorting nostril, flying mane,
And fiery spirit; and the lad who breeds
Their mettled herd, and pastures them, and feeds,
Rode the black foremost, scorning spur or rein.

His eyes were like a seer's and like a child's.
His body shone irradiating joy.
He fought his furious mount with strength and art.
And then my mind divined the glorious boy
As Eros, tamer in the heavenly wilds
Of all the passions of the human heart.

LOVE IN ARMOR

Love scorns that Love implore you
To bind his hurts or heal;
Prays only, arm around you,
To draw on hours that hound you,
To whirl his sword before you
And fence your path with steel.

Not for the beauty of you,
The peace of all your ways,
He burns—but in your quarrel
To hold the pass of peril,
To stand at arms above you
Against embattled days.

No comfort for his blundering
He cries your heart to yield,
But that his arm enfold you,
His shield-arm shield and hold you
Safe, when the foe charge thundering,—
His sword against the field!

WARDROBE OF REMEMBRANCE

Guises your moods once wore are hung within
The closet of my mind. I take access
This moment to regard them and confess
How spare for want of you they hang, and thin.
Pity seems all their argument may win,
That fine, frail rustling of each mood's meet dress.
Yet starts a subtle incense from the press,
Crushed perfumes of the flowers your thoughts have been.

Sweeter than ever spoken do they come
Again with finer relish to my mind
Starved on your absence. False surmise is numb,
For now in these reliques of you I find
The smile you meant when rebel lips were dumb,
The kind words agitation made unkind.

THE SECOND COVENANT

I dreamt that we were lying
On a high hill afar,
Our deepest thoughts replying
To one lone star.
High from the vault of heaven
Its silver rays were shed;
And the deep peace between us
Was the peace of the dead.

Our busy lives were over,
Our day and night and day;
Of you and me your lover,
Nought more to say;
And sorrows we had vanquished
And blisses we had known
And our cares and our kisses
To the four winds were blown.

The handclasp of contrition,
The eyesight of each
Where each had recognition,
Were passed, with our speech.
Vast night declared above us,
"Now sight and semblance fade,
No heart's emotion bindeth
A shadow to a shade."

Then within me, lying near you,
A dark sadness grew
That, to cherish or to cheer you,
There was nought left to do.
Of happy daily service
Nought now remained to me—
Of good news for you and comfort
As once it used to be.

No beauty save the spirit's
Abode wide heaven's scrolls;
No charm the flesh inherits,
No strength save the soul's;
As breath upon a mirror
All recognizing sign.
Yet nearer far and dearer
Your soul spoke to mine.

For viewed not of each other,
Yet closer side by side
Than child unto his mother,
Than husband to bride,
Thought unto thought you answered.
One prayer we seemed—one breath;
And the deep love between us
Was the love after death.

DEDICATION TO A FIRST BOOK

Braver than sea-going ships with the dawn in their sails,
Than the wind before dawn more healing and fragrant and free,
Fairer than sight of a city all white from the mountain-top viewed in the vales,
Or the silver-bright flakes of the moonlight in lakes, when the moon rides the clouds and the forest awakes,
You are to me!

For you are to me what the bowstring is to the shaft,
Speeding my purpose aloft and aflame and afar,
Through the thick of the fight, in your eyes' steady light my soul hath seen splendor, and laughed.
Now, however I tend betwixt foeman and friend through the riddle of Life to Death's light at the end,
I ride for your star!

THE SHADOWED ROAD

Our shadows moved before us on the road.
The trees that watched us brooded dark and still,
Streaked by the frost with phosphorescent gray.
Chill followed sharply on a gorgeous day
Of winds, blown leaves, red bonfires. Faintly showed
The mist-ringed moon above the pasture hill.

Our shadows moved before us. By our side
New mystery, throbbing through the rhythm of life
Echoed our footsteps; and its presence grew
So real to me, I felt its power endue
An archangelic shape, whose phantom stride
Rhymed with our own who walked as man and wife.

Light fell upon us from the glimmering moon,
And light upon his face whose name is Love.
Ah, the rapt eyes, the tender, quickening gaze,
The splendor on that wild immortal face!
Then hurrying cloud possessed the heavens, and soon
I saw his shadow darken from above.

Beyond our own it stretched along the way,
The darkness of Death's cowl, more deep than night.
Gulfing our own, it blotted out the road,
The shadow of Love that brightest dreams forebode.
Yet, in my soul I found a thing to say:
"Though darkness go before, we walk in light.

"This is Love's answer!" For Death's night must move
Onward before two hearts that cast out fear,
Joined by the closest of immortal bonds.
They shall speak truth when prayer to prayer responds,
"Death but precedes us as the shadow of Love.
Light falls about us from a surer sphere!"

LOVE IN THE DAWN

Dawn, with hallowed flame, seemed to sing your name
Through our open window as the golden glory came.
Ardor thrilled me through; Dawn again—with you!
"Up and at the world again! The world is made anew!"

Newly on my sight flashed the lovely light,
All the ringing roads of fame glittered broad and bright.
On again! with new visions to pursue;
And dawn again, dawn again, dawn again—with you!

Other dawns may keep joy as pure and deep?
Dawns of greater splendor may awaken me from sleep?
Nay! they never can bless a stubborn man
Like the dawn, the wonder-dawn with which this day began!

Oh, my deeds must take triumph for its sake!
Loud my heart shall sing it while the mind remains awake:
Words I never knew could so thrill me through—
Dawn again, dawn again, dawn again—with you!

"HAD I A CLAIM TO FAME?"

Had I a claim to fame?
  Little to honor;
Save when I spoke her name,
  Gazing upon her.
Then was I crowned of men,
  More than my seeming.
Youth's glorious hope again
  Bannered my dreaming.

So, when our day is past;
  When we lie stilly
Under the earth at last,
  Clod by white lily.
Give me neither tear nor sigh;
Breath but this in passing by,
Where empearled with morning dew
  The high grass above her
Waves, and above me too,—
  "He was her lover!"

THE ONE

You are that belovèd thing
Which, through all my seeking
In silence or in speaking,
I would find, and finding sing!

You are that belovèd air
Which, o'er all the chiming
Of music or of rhyming,
Reconciles my long despair.

You are that belovèd sight
Which, beyond life's fairest
Or rich beauty's rarest,
Fills my heart with true delight.

You are that belovèd place
Where, past all the portals
To the pomp of mortals,
Love perceives the courts of grace,

And what splendors more,—ah, well!
Though I often fashion
Songs of praise and passion,
Now—I look—but cannot tell!

DREAM AND DEED

All day long I am fashioning crowns,
Crowns of great price for you!
What do I fashion them of?
Opals and pearls of the dew,
Diamonds of old renowns,
Blazing rubies of love,
And gold from the heart of the golden sun, brought down by a sunset djinn,—
Brighter gold, purer gold than ever gleamed under Andvari's fin!

All day long I am tempering swords,
Swords for my thought to wield!
What is the steel I true,
And how is their splendor annealed?
High dreams, to slay evil hordes,
And flaming thoughts of you
That light my dark heart from their white-hot forge—a glory to take one's breath—
Like the dove-gray, rose-faint veils of faith you wind round the skull of death!

But when was a sword or a crown
For praise or for honor meet,
When the truth transcends, and sees
Knighthood kneeling at your feet?

In the darkness they go down!
There is better trust in these:
Set teeth, and the furious will to strive through the dust
of the world for you;
The hardly builded house of deeds each day, that must
prove me true!

A TAPER OF INCENSE

You are a bannered balcony
Of God's heraldic house,
Waving above the dinning throng of the days
Pennants of purple and oriflammes of crimson
And cloths of gold.
Your varying device is on every shining shield
Of the brilliant row that flames beneath the eaves
Of that house whose street is cobbled with silver clouds.

The days go down that street, the troops of days
Dark and bright, tramping to tread the earth.
Ever, with trumpets and tumult, rigor or laughter,
They pass saluting, to press upon the world,
Regiment after regiment unnumbered.

Your beauty is a balcony hung with banners
To wave them on. The foremost have sent your name
Echoing rearward to hearten new battalions.
Your beauty is the sunset's streaming flag,
It is the vivid standard of the dawn
Flapping over dazed dream-voyagers
That kneel on new sun-pooled, mysterious strands.
It wasted the moon to pallor, set the sun
Pulsing with burning blood—it shattered the mind
Of heaven into stars.

The beauty of your spirit has sent the winds
Eternally sighing, and sharpened the cold ache

Of the heart-broken, incessantly-sobbing sea.
It has scattered its sparks in the hearts of silken flowers
And has raised the frozen fury of glaciers against the North
And has permeated the South with its elusive fragrance.
Auroral over East and West it dances.

You are a crystal goblet of such wine
Set in a niche of night
That when Death quaffs you he must glow to life
Flushed with eternity.

O proud Love, so humble and human,
Yet beyond the gods to exalt—
O quiet Love, couching with the curled might and majesty
Of tawny leopards!
O tamed tiger, Love, whose golden eyes
Weep for the thrift of angels!
Thou pinnacled pain of the midnight,
Rose-strewer of daylit mire,
Transfiguration of our futile lives,
Dazzler into the secret courts of heaven—
Thou whose passion is written in all men's blood and tears
And in silver letters upon the books of God—
Make me to stand erect, and walk with danger,
And strive like a flame!
For Thou and I are struck as cymbals of God's exultation
In Life, His song!

TO PURITY

God knows that you are beautiful as Death
Chanced on in some hot, sunlit forest-clearing
Where—burst from tangled thickets, with desperate breath—
My outlawed heart might gasp at him appearing
So sudden and dazzling upon my rage and fearing,—
Such pale announcement, such quietude should endue
Tall, proud, grave Death, with noble footsteps nearing!
Immortal goddess, thus beautiful are you!

God knows that you are passionate as Life,
On rhythmic curves of bosom and limb attending,—
Sweet as clear water, and acid as a knife
Thrust through fresh fruit wherewith the bough is bending,—
Yet rule the riotous blood to Man's befriending,—
Yea, hush his ghastly tears the midnight through,
To flesh of flesh your ageless mystery lending.
Ah, holy goddess, thus terrible are you!

God knows that you are hated as men hate
Only the highest and the uttermost presence,
For in your eyes is anger to break fate
And life's too blissful sweet is all your essence.
Your glory seethed the suns to incandescence,
You are flame—flame! Our creeds your orb unto

Are but thin shadowy demilunes and crescents,—
Immortal goddess, so infinite are you!

Infinite in range of life, the worm you quicken
From crashing suns. . . . "Let there be light!" you said.
Light was, and life,—Man rose, and Man fell stricken
By your relentless power that through him sped;
And again Man rose, halt like the walking dead,
Dragging these heavy laws you never knew
Till you recoiled from him astonishèd,—
Ah, holy goddess, so wonderful were you!

So now Man hath smeared filth upon your altar,
And, slant-eyed and slime-lipped, wrought sins apart.
His tongue intones an abominable psalter
Hoarsely, and on his brows cold sweat-drops start,—
Nor through your oracles speaks he from his heart,
Hearing you in the porches of his ears;
His eyes are blind of you, where only smart
The sick revulsions of his ignorant tears.

No! He intones by rote a coded praise,
Unto a leering two-faced god falls prone,
And smears with lust and fear his alternate days
For monstrous imaginations to atone;
For you, most instant, most ardent,—you are flown
Like fumes to his clownish brain, and in his fear
He dreams you a eunuch carved of pallid stone
Warning, "Beware all ye who enter here!"

TO PURITY

God knows you are as clean as the sea-gust
Uproarious round those poppied headlands high
Where huge green seas beneath, in billows upthrust,
Scatter snow-amethysts to the bright sapphire sky,—
Or music on which fusillade the hoof-beats by
Of screaming valkyr-steeds, to exalted strife!
You are love's seal and love's nobility,
And the burning flame, the aching flame of Life!

Therefore, transfigurer of the flesh,—clear-shining
Redeemer of the coinage passed for base,—
Strong flawless column, round which all vipers twining
Hiss out their venom and die on their disgrace,—
Oh radiant form, oh rapt victorious face
Of our dreams of love, toward whom all brave and true
Strain upward, seeking out your holiest place,—
This praise I raise, this praise I raise to you!

ATONEMENT

Through flamelit Hades
To win a realm,
I rode with my lady's
Sleeve on my helm.
With fiends around me
And fiends before,
I rode, and found me
At an iron door.

My pulses hammered.
I clubbed my spear
And knocked. Fiends clamored.
I felt Man's fear
When mysteries awe him.
The door, with din,
Swung wide. I saw him
Who sat therein.

Oh, amaranthine
Are Love's estates,
But Rhadamanthine
The Judge awaits.
My blazon and banner
He stared them through
And said, *"What manner*
Of man are you?"

ATONEMENT

I stood stripped naked,
Stark to atone.
My body achèd
Through every bone.
A blast blew through me.
I drank black gall.
I saw he knew me.
I told him all.

"The heart I stare in
Is black as night,"
He said, "but therein
There burns a light.
White hands encore it
To guard its grace,
And strangely o'er it
Bends a still face.

"Small light—great wonder!
Through all my hall
You flash asunder
The murky pall.
Walls grow unreal—
All Hell a wraith,—
Oh white, ideal
Flame of her faith!"

"Here I surrender,
White flame of trust!
Knave, strike some splendor
From this your dust.

Oh gross, weak, dumb thing,
Rise—dare a part!
For here—is something
That breaks my heart!"

THE ADORATION

Now, like withdrawing music
Where pillared aisles implore,
You are a vanished choir,
A soft-closed door.

Victorious voices blended
Fade, and I kneel still-hearted.
Sudden my life is ended.
We have parted.

Lost in the vault's vast splendor
My ghost goes rising, thinning.
Can heartbreak be an end, or
Some strange beginning?

TALISMAN

Each cup shall be broken,
Each tower shall fall,
All drink be bitter,
Bitter as gall,
The dark heart go lonely—
Save for one tower,
One cyathus only,
One wine of power!

My love's white beauty
Is this tower,
The wine of her beauty
My wine of power,
The cup of her spirit
Mine to drain
With awful knowledge
And trembling pain.

She only, she only
Stands on the stars.
Her small hands grapple
Heaven's black bars.
Only her deep love
Pays the price
Of a sight of the vistas
Of paradise.

TALISMAN

Each goblet may shatter,
Each tower may fall,
Low livid sunset
Darken on all—
In her soul's high tower
My love pours wine,
And the glory and the power
Of the stars are mine!

RECOGNITION

Like the twilight blowing over sunset water
Under high holy hills purple-mirrored in a mere,
Quietly and smiling, my dear love brought her
Heart to my heart, and through the dusk drew near;

Drew to me near, drew my brows up to the tender
Caress of her hands. And I lifted up my eyes
To hers, and deep within them saw a silent splendor
More still, more strange than the planets' in the skies.

Each gazed on each. O what is mortal seeing
To the glory of that depth, to the glory of that height
Through veils revealed, when all the gates of being
Burst open to a torrent of such blinding light!

Yes, and here I stand warped by life's derision,
A mountebank grimacing lest at last I weep.
What man could tell that I had ever seen a vision
More wonderful than any on the steeps of sleep?

Days come, days go, as the clock ticks hours.
Years loom, years pass; the shadows rise. . . .
Like the twilight breathing over holy flowers
Once my love drew near. And I lifted up my eyes . . .

TRIBUTE

Remembering one woman I have seen
And have known,
Benignant eyes, nobility of mien,
A scarf from off a perfect shoulder blown,
Solicitude, white ardor in a face,
Motions like water under the moon's grace,—
I wonder much how men can be so base,
So worse than stone.

Oh murmurings of music through the world,
Ye women born
To arduous things and angers, and upwhirled
Like tongues of flame through smoke of the world's scorn,
Crystalline lights, awful and fitful gleams
Of reconciliation with our dreams,
Through you alone the world's true spirit streams
Sounding her silver horn.

All things I wish for you that height may hold,
Who hold the race,
Oh desperate runners on the track unrolled
Over the highlands now, in the sun's face;
O swift and free, hoverers on the verge
Whence the impossible things we mocked emerge,—
O wings—wings—sliding the starry surge
And veering on the chase!

The satyr and the centaur race below
Deriding wings above.
Manful they meet and fight to overthrow
All they are wearied of,—
Manful they build, demolish, drive, are driven,—
But you are free, who have more greatly striven,
Yours is the light above their lightless heaven,
For yours is Love!

THE SILVER HIND

Through the black forest
You glance, you start,—
Through the black forest
That is my heart!
Beautiful, silver-heeled,
Swift as wind,
Topping the brake
Like a flying hind!

I have a bugle
Of ivory
The wizard of twilight
Gave to me.
I hear it winding in my heart,
In the black forest, where you start.

And I know,
Like huntsmen in gold and green,
That my thoughts spur past
Where you have been,
And, like hounds that have slipped the leash,
They race,—
Bell-tongued brachets
Upon your trace.

Through the black forest
You reach, you run,

Out of the shadow,
Into the sun.
And the hunt behind
Is lyric and loud
Where horses and hounds
And huntsmen crowd. . . .

But you are gone—
Oh, you are gone
Out to the blaze and glory of dawn!
Leaving the print of blood-red anemones
In the mould, and echoes of ancient glees
Shaking like silver leaves on my sombre trees!

ARISTEAS RELATES HIS YOUTH

(Who, in his age, was reported a magician throughout all Greece, as it was said that his soul could leave his body at will.)

Early rose was the light
As I sought the portico
Whence her wings had fluttered in flight
And with surge and flow
Had risen to soar, and go
Out, out over the sea,
Dwindling white and soft and slow
To a memory.

Oh, grief of all years to be!
Most miserable of men!
My throat ached with my tears,
As a sword driven through my ears
Was my anguish then.

Dark were the rooms where they lay
Who loved in the flesh
(Diana's disciples they said!)
In that lupanar of the dead.
Sweet was the flesh they loved,
Graceful the limbs that moved,
Wild the passion that they

Desired afresh
In the night. Were they not of the world,
Of lust and toil and war?
And I—I too?
Yea—till that music swirled
About me, and I knew
I was visited of a star!

A star it was grew and grew
(As hot in the dark I lay,
Panting, after the feast,)
Glorious out of the east,
And a face that made my soul
A slowly uncrumpling scroll,
It glimmered so near and fey!

Her voice rippled like water
In the light gold-green
Of some mid-noon ravine.
She stooped, the moon's daughter,
With her hand underneath my head
And her lips on the lips of the dead.
I arose from my rumpled bed.

A waterfall sliding green
In a silver-mosaicked screen
We two trod under;
Then I turned where her light touch led,
Trembling but unafraid.
Across some Elysian sod,
Winged of heel, I floated—a god!—

Down and into a moon-filled glade,
A glade of wonder. . . .

But the east grew steadily bright,
A glaring sea of light.
I throbbed to drums of dread.
And my eyes still held her flight
When she broke that dream with one kiss
Of agonizing bliss,
Stood in streaming flame by my bed,
Gestured, and fled.

Between the pillars I saw,
Beyond the pillars I heard
Wings of no mortal bird
Flare and withdraw.
And they who had feasted and passioned
Slept, finding light no bar,
Slept in their bodies' ease.
But under those rustling seas
That lapped at the water-stair
I ached to plunge my despair
And my heart, that some grim God fashioned
To be visited of a star!

MAN POSSESSED

Shaken, a thousand times shaken, with the millions that grieve,
Now at last I am overtaken. I will say I believe.
I ran with the pennons of morning astream over me.
On the precipice, scorning its warning, I ran to be free.
Still I love high winds and the great running and the steep verge,
But strength past my strength overtakes my cunning, and stars emerge
High over me, eternal, deathless, deep over deep,
And my head sways heavy as I run breathless, my eyelids droop with sleep.

Yet it is not this has shaken my soul in me,
Not the bounds of life have overtaken my will to be free,
But scent and sound past mete and bound, and a sign—a sign
That no other eyes can recognize, that is only mine.
I hardly know what I believe or what I mean
Save there is sweetness round my heart and the world a screen
Of interwoven mystery to a world unseen.

Can one drink the air, can one seize the sea, can one grasp the fire?
Even so intangible to me the answer to my desire.

The elements we feel and see shift and drift and suspire
And we therein behind the screen, with glimmering brains that tire.
That is all! Nor can I fall now in the race.
As a second breath to a runner comes my soul takes up the pace—
For I dreamed the world ran with me in a far and starry place.

Gray as sea-mist driven were the shapes that strove
With the strength of greed and hate and the greater strength of love.
I saw their eyes like phosphorus, blue fog about them wove.
I saw the limbs glimmer and I heard the sighing come
From this side and from that, as our host ran dumb
Over a silver shining plain, to some strange end, to some—
Was it goal or heaven or city?—some agonizing gleam
That broke the heart for pity and made the eyes stream.
Above the pallor of that race our spent breath rose like steam,
Yet our red hearts pulsed within us, as we ran, in my dream.

A glow below the ghostly surf that swirled and surged and turned
Came from human hearts visible that throbbed and beat and burned,
And like sand of human ashes was the soil our feet spurned.

All the stars above us thronged the dome of space,
Poised like javeliniers, with glinting spear or mace,
Watchful of our running and to spoil our race,
And all the souls that ran, ran with drawn and lifted face.

This too was the real. I ran with dogged heart.
I parched like a desert, tortured in every part.
I knew not what city—nor why the race should start.

Then a singing touched me, and the scent of a flower,
A child's laugh, and the crying of a woman in her hour,
And a comrade's courage—and a subtle power
Not of worldly schemes and ways crept along my veins,
And my heart went ablaze and consumed its many stains,
And my lips were touched with wine and my body felt no pains.
Then it passed—and yet again it came and it passed—
Yet again and yet again, till I toiled at last
In the old ironic torture, bound fast, bound fast.

But as I looked I saw how it came and went,
That touch, that communion, almost inevident,
Through the host of these my brothers who ran nigh spent.
When it came they ran like men with life and lung
And the wind went by them like a song bravely sung,
Their hearts spread wide radiance, their limbs glowed young.
It passed, and they were phantoms with phantom arms that swung.

Here and there a true form some spirit would endue
For moments, but we mortals were but ghosts I knew.
Then a light low down before us to a distant landscape
grew.
The stars from heaven crowded down. I knew our race
was through.
The stars from heaven crowded down intolerably bright
With dizzying brilliance, height above armored height.
Every star upcast a spear and hurled it down to smite.

There was one strange thought in me. It echoed through
my head
As some titanic corridor echoes a giant tread,
Only a little thing that my love once had said.
Common daily speech, a comforting word
Tossed to me as lightly as crumbs to a bird,
But it lived in my heart, it broke to flame and stirred
My self to a purpose at last not self could mar,
And I cried "We are delivered!" and I heard it echo far
Up to the vault of heaven past star on shrinking star.

So then I was running through poppies that I knew
Above a blue sea basking—and you—and you
Were running on the headland in the world made anew.

I know some force is mighty, some force I cannot reach.
I know that words are said to me that are not said with
speech.
My heart has learned a lesson that I can never teach.
Only this I know, that I am overtaken
By a swifter runner Whose breath is never shaken,

That I follow on His pace, and that round me, as I waken,
Are the headlands of home and the blue sea swinging
And the flowers of the valleys their fresh scents flinging
And the prophets and the poets, with their singing—
with their singing!

MINIATURE

For all your gestures, for your gray-blue eyes
And Irish mouth, and hair that makes you child,
When shaken out at evening; for your mirth
And your quick pity, and your mother's breast;
For the great tenderness that you have given
And the rich dreams through purple-flowing night,
The holy lull of effort and the peace
Of a deep love; because of all these things,
Wherever I should be,—beyond what seas
Of an enchanted music, on what isles,
I know not, of a strange irradiance,
In dream or life or death,—dissatisfied
With splendor or white mystery, my heart
Would break—my heart would break—never to hear
Your tones again or feel your hair again
Beneath my lips, or see your lifted eyes
Brimming with all the secrets of the stars!

DEATH WILL MAKE CLEAR

What in the night says the clock that ticks time to eternity,
Swimmer of waves of your thought that are dark waves and deep?
What in the night says the moon, from her patient infinity,
Laying pale hands on your heart, hands of peace and of sleep?
What say the stars to her eyes, who has loosed by the window
The billow of her hair, as the dark of the trees feels her fear?
And over the cradle what whisper is breathing, is breathing,
As over the bed of the bride or the catafalqued bier,
Or over the flung and clawed earth where a soldier is dying?
"Death will make clear!"

Furious and fleet is man's soul, like a hound through the woodland,
On through the tangle of trees and the green and the gold.
Yes, for the senses are goads, but the lineage noble,
Not for the warren or hutch to be cornered and sold.

Then there is freedom and ease, and a dream that persuades one
On, till the track quakes on black whence the death-lilies peer.
So the bronzed shoulder, that sets to the crust of the boulder
Heaving it up—as the mill-wheel that turns at the weir—
Bring—? They bring silence and candles and creaking and whispers.
Death will make clear.

Why that white work from the crag and the hands of the sculptor
Smitten in a moment to rubble as earth heaves her breast?
Why that intangible glory, remote but God-in-us,
Golden and crumbling to pathos of dusk in the west?
Why the pure curve of the arm and the breast of a mother,
Yes, and the proud head of man held erect on the mere
Void of blue heaven,—the seas and the ships and the trumpets,
Towers and horizons, all shouting? The answer is here,
Here in thy breast, son of man, sorry son of the ages.
Death will make clear.

Lord of the mighty, as Lord of the weak and the lowly,
Lord of the sage and the madman, of clean and unclean;
Breeder of suns and of excrement, loathly and holy,
Graving the skull with the pity of all that had been,—
Death, oh thou graver of countenance knighted austerely,

Yea, on the pitiful clay, such poor flesh in its fear
Of God and the soul and the singing of stars that may
teach us
Wisdom at last,—oh thou ultimate searcher and seer,
Beckon—I follow. At last on my lips set thy finger;
Thou wilt make clear!

SUNLIGHT

Sunlight is full of age.
Ah, so old!
Older than any sage
Has ever told!

The draught our Lord quaffed up
To the bloody lees;
The aching hemlock cup
Of Socrates.

It is a golden sword;
The veil of the Grail;
The unfathomable Word
That will not fail.

Along a summer street
It often lies
Shimmering to repeat
Immortal paradise.

As a mountain lake can mirror
The exalted with the near,
Heaven's wonder and terror—
Both shine here.

It says all things in nought;
And, saying them, passes

To gild like gentle thought
Trees and grasses.

It sways upon the ocean
Like a god asleep
Where the waves' wandering motion
Hides the deep.

It shafts through forest aisles
Like miracle;
It trembles and smiles
On the lip of Hell.

It has touched Greece and Rome
And Persia's might—
And stirs the vines of home
With flickering light.

It lay on Cain's hot neck
As he stooped to slay.
David's stone from the beck
Glittered its day.

Cleopatra gazed upon it
Through shadowed lids.
High halls they built to shun it
In the Pyramids.

It opens babies' hands
That crawl to snatch its beams.
Through hovels in ancient lands
Its splendor streams.

SUNLIGHT

Eternal wells of light
Its largeness shows.
There shall be no more night
Its conscience knows.

It is a smiling stranger,
A fainting hour,
Love and peace and danger
And the mock of power.

Yet have I said no word
Of what it is.
Only—my heart is stirred
By its mysteries!

AND A LONG WAY OFF HE SAW FAIRYLAND

I lived once with fairies,
(And I know they're *true* fairies!)
One lifts laughing eyes
In a way I most admire.
Truth goes by contraries,
For you don't know they're fairies
Till there isn't any firelight,
Nor song beside the fire.

One fairy's small to hold,
And her hair is fairy gold.
One's a feminine fairy
With unusual address.
One fairy's just Jim.
You just look and love him,
With his nonsense and his laugh
And his sturdy steadfastness.

And the fairy queen I knew
Has eyes that are blue,
Has moods that are decided,
And courage that denies
It is ever brave at all.
She mends them when they fall;
She tends the little fairies
In absurd, delightful wise.

They bring her thoughts like birds
And very funny words
And mountainous decisions
And things to make you cry.
But, after all, it's airy
In the house of a fairy,
With a face like that to sob to
And those arms close by.

I lived once with a fairy.
I was wild and contrary.
I'm *still* wild and contrary.
But her heart's a heart for two.
She sees rooms of starry graces,
Kind firelight on our faces,
And a watch on sleeping fairies,
And the fairy home come true.
Once again, with gentle evening
And the dreaming trees, come true.

IN TIME OF TROUBLE

In memory of your desolate eyes I know
That words are words, with nothing to gainsay
The testimony of pain, the heavy day;
But searching in the ruins of overthrow
I gathered you this wreath that now I show;
Small and barbaric brightness on the gray,—
Glimmering irony, perhaps. I lay
It down before your eyes, and softly go.

You are a vista blundered on in Arden
Where the fool grasps his bells, that he may hark;
A sudden skyward path where cliffs are warden
Of waves that foam to reach a high tide-mark;
Whisper of blossoms in a midnight garden;
A fountain whitely flowering on the dark.

ANOMALY

Men who are fain to change, look wizenedly
Into the flowing mirror of your thought
And see on what strange reefs your joys are caught
And contemplate your vexed variety:
Grief that was hooded for eternity
Casting the stole for spangled domino,
Awe on its pinnacle jigging heel and toe.
Love laughing into hate and mockery.

What shoots the warp to patterns that reblend
And spread and fade,—and working out what end?
In time of pain why be as voluble
As one who tells an endless useless sum,
Yet simple clay, pallid and deaf and dumb
Through the one moment forging Heaven or Hell?

THE LOVER

I rooted silver stars from heaven in showers,
Rived adamant to show an azure gap,
Captured the very Psyche in my cap,
Filched from the sack of Time six diamond hours.
Hyperborean in my crown of flowers
I ran and leapt the cliff of thunderclap
Plunging through green sea-light where bronze fronds
wrap
Crumbling pearl palaces and coral bowers.

Now—"Could I move, all humankind would pant
Even to think such effort! Could my songs
Cry out, dusked heaven would shudder at my wrongs!"
I moaned, and then looked flushed and palpitant
On Love's rapt face, that frenzied flagellant
Wielding with zeal the welting golden thongs.

JUDGMENT

Down the deep steps of stone through iron doors
I entered that red room and saw the rack,
And round the walls I saw them sit in black,
The immutable and urgent councillors.
My heart was clotted with an old remorse,
Despair a vulture fast upon my back.
I saw my body like an empty sack
Tossed disarticulate on grated floors.

But even a wilder wonder at this crime
Tried in the dungeon of my own grim life
Woke, as your memory awoke with tune
That crazed the very walls. I stared through Time
Like to a man who stands with smoking knife
Above his dead, and sees the rising moon.

UNFORGOTTEN

Wakening in the night, the pain that slumber
Strikes with her mace of silence dead and dumb
Loomed over me and, formless, said, "I come!
Bringing illusions lost beyond all number.
Rigid you lie, yet for a little cumber
This flaming world, where some die proudly, some
Glitter like granite, or dream millenium."
It left me toiled in mountainous clouds of umber.

I lay sustaining all the old emotion,
Numbed as beneath the blows of iron cars.
Then slowly, slowly some supreme devotion
Crept down, and drew me out of ageless wars,
Like a dear voice heard over darkened ocean
When all dim heaven is trembling into stars.

THE PALE DANCER

My heart's a still shore; all the golden sails are gone.
A pale, silver floor in the hugeness of dawn
My heart lies once more, and the little ripples beat
This small, idle tune, like the fall of elves' feet,
"Oh, come, airy dancer—come dance on us, Sweet!"

She comes like a breeze in the midnight of May.
The tumbling of the seas makes a tune far away.
She comes with closed eyes, with light footsteps she nears,
And she sings the low song that each lipping ripple hears.
"In love there is laughter, and after—come tears!"

She dances like the moonlight—light, languorous, aswoon.
Her face floats uplifted, a flower to the moon,
To the moon pale in heaven and the dawn coming slow,
And under her measure the ripples breathe low,
"The dancer, the dancer from ages ago!"

Oh, dance me no more! Witching dancer be gone!
For my heart's a still shore in the hugeness of dawn,
And some answer is thrilling, is trembling for me
In the eerie still brightness of heaven and sea,
And the little ripples whisper, "What thing can it be?"

Pale dancer, pale dancer, atread without breath,
Majestic and yearning and brooding as death,
Oh, passion of my heart, oh, enchanted despair
That glides before God like a bird from a snare,
Return, then, return to me, clothe me with care!—
But the beautiful dancer has vanished in air.

PREMONITION

(Written in absence and unaware of her desperate condition, a few days before her death.)

This is the song I shall make.
Love with white wing bids it wake.
Love with dark wing bids it die.
Trailing to dimness, the flood of my passion,
Glittering to darkness, the necklace I fashion
To loop on the breast of the sky!

I have climbed high, even I,
Following a light through a rift in the blue,
Following a silence that pierced like a cry,
Following the image of you.

This is the song I will fashion for you.

Oh ragged-jawed, jagged-toothed Dragon of Time,
What will you do with the weft of my rhyme,
You who have pawed every jewel in slime—
You!

No, in this space between darkness and light,
Holiness gleams like a rift in the night
Here where I stand and command the full height,
All of the glory and gall . . .
Wrestle and struggle and surge for the height—
And fall. . . .

Pain, your pale hands are clenched loose in my hair.
My heaving breast to your bleakness is bare.
Each of the other as brothers aware,
Backward and forward we strain.
What is this struggle, why my despair,
Pain?

God is somewhere in the night.
Listen! The night is so still
God could be heard if he walked on the height
As a man at night will walk on a hill
Lulled by the darkness and dim.
Heaven is the hill under Him.
Is there not glimmer of light at its rim?

Pain? Ah the struggle again.
Drive then your darts in me, drive!
Pang after pang of it, Pain.
Wounds that will wake me alive.
Listen! The night is a hive
Of sound like a swarming of myriad bees.
Drive the gold darts in me, whet them and drive,
Pain! But his shadow flees.
What is this plain, whose these shapes that connive
Peace?

Peace? But your garment is smirched
With grime and the stain of blood!
Peace! When I struggled and searched,
Ah, when have I understood?
I who was broken and spent,

PREMONITION

I who was baffled, and meant
Only to wrench my release!

Who are Those crouching behind you, so still and intent,
Peace?

Memories? Why do they haunt?
Lust and vainglory and pride?
What is it now of my victory they want?
What of you, Peace, the crucified?
This is the height. Can they scan it?
This is no space-festering planet.
This is no rack of vain tears!
Even a dream, can they cloud it and ban it,—
Fears?

Years go over me, cloud me and cover me,
Years—haunted years.

Only one thing I say over and over
Under that catafalque glooming to cover
My shame and disaster and wraith of faith.
Only one thing I say over and over,
Your name, said under my breath.

There, like a storm on the sea line, you hover,
Death!

Ripples and eddies and whirlpools of light
Swirling like veils on the face of the night.
Down from the infinite, down from the height
Stricken and whirled,

Swept like a leaf on the blast of the night
Back to the world!

Breathing beside me—your breath!
Listen! The night is so still
God could be heard if he talked with Death
As a man at night might talk on a hill
Gently and sad to a friend
Of the things we always intend . . .
Night without end for Him—*night without end* . . . !

This is the song I have made
Of the night when I was afraid,
Of the night too breathless, too still,
When I lay like stone—alone—alone,
However near me the love we kill.
What of the love we kill?

Pride that died and darkness that grew!
This is the song I began to wreathe . . .
Ah, but God remembered,—it is not true!
And you—you live, you breathe!

AFTER

I

On Sunday in the sunlight
With brightness round her strown
And murmuring beauty of the sky
At last her very own,
She who had loved all children
And all high things and clean
Turned away to silentness
And bliss unseen.

Rending, blinding anguish,
Is all a man can know;
Yet still I kneel beside her
For she would have it so,
Kneel and pray beside her
In light she left behind—
Light and love in silentness,
Sight to the blind.

Oh living light burn through me!
Oh speak, as spoke to me
Her deep sweet eyes and faithful,
Voice on Calvary!
Oh light be near and shining,
Nearer than I guess,
And teach me that true language
Of silentness!

II

If now I fall away
From faith, may never day
Shine as it shone
With inmost sanctities
Of those sun-glittering trees—
We two alone.

The darkness toils and heaves.
The Wood of Glittering Leaves
You gave—you gave,
Dearest in life and death,
Dearest with every breath,
Lamp of the brave!

You came in sunlight, still
As God, with Whom your will
Was always one.
You knew me, and you knew
I read your presence through
That sacred sun.

League upon league of light,
As the train raced the night,
With night on me,
With pain that gripped and wrung
As the cars clashed and swung,—
I yet could see

The slim trees of that wood
Brighter than tears or blood,
Fairy with day;
That dark marsh land made bright,
Veiled in miraculous light,—
Your way!

I hold it fast. I hold
All that mysterious gold,
All that it weaves
Of Heaven to understand—
Our radiant bridal land
Of glittering leaves.

III

Honest hands to help, honest eyes to see,
Light that lives in God:
Such our dearest was, such will ever be
Under Heaven.
Nothing in this life gives to you and me
Such a sunlight-shod,
Sunlight-crowned delight in our memory
As was given.

There was not a harm in these roaring hours
That could touch Her head
Perfect was Her charm borne against the powers
Gnashing still.
In her heart a field laughed with golden flowers
Where Her soul could tread.
Swift, serene, she passed all that snarls and cowers,
White of will.

Song can give her nothing. We who brave the night
Say Her name again
Raise it like a cup full of sacred light
Up to Heaven.
Now we know our pain blinding, burning bright
In the world of men.
Yet we know our joy, knowing now aright
What was given.

IV

Base rewards and glamours, the beating tide of hours,
The crying and clamors and the surge of silent powers
Pass me and pass me now. Silently I go
The one road, the only road I know.

Oh, bare and bright as dreams
And laced with silver streams
Lies the land on either hand, past the darkness and dread.
Though a man must grip his soul lest it start from all control,
And must bow his head.

Where are your footprints on air that I may find them?
Where your radiant garments that I may hide behind them?
No, it is my own road, straight and black
That turns not back.

I will search till the darkness sears on either hand
With the drifting sparkles of some fiery brand,
Of some pain that lights me nearer to the land of your endeavor.
I will search forever.

The torrent of the hours like a veil veiling heaven,
The war with bitter powers—I am given.

But light that you left me—light, your own decision,
Your secret and your vision.

Time? What is Time now. Standing to the thong
And the dream that is passing, time is not long.
And I shall find the valley past the mountains that
defeat me,
And see you come to meet me.

V

Not all the spoils you cast, not all the dark was bearing
In dream across the sea, across the murmurous sea;
Not beauty that has passed or crowns the stars were wearing
Or flame that fierce and fast through darkness hunted me;
Not the frustrate desire, the web of memory broken,
The silence where your speech dizzies through all the air;
Not these elude my reach when the dark hours have spoken
As does that priceless token, your soul of passionate prayer.

Oh race that falters on, the striving and the stricken
Passing with fruits and garlands and dust upon the head;
Oh burning sunset gone wherein was hope to quicken
The surge of starry dawn rising above the dead;
Oh clamor over shame, yoke of the little-wiser
On the unwilling shoulders, clenched by the quivering hands;
Patience and proof that were and are your still appriser
Now veil her and disguise her, gone from the spectral lands.

The spectral lands of time, the eternal torrent pouring
Of dark and light around us, who fear both dark and light;
And grief that wails in rhyme, and flesh the soul abhorring,
And dismal pantomine played on a stage moon-bright;
Why should such things as these assail her happy meadow,
Creep on the court of children, come crying through the shine?
We who are too unskilled even to taunt the shadow
Groan only in the darkness and spill the precious wine!

For round us beating, beating her wings are in the mirror
Of sleep, the mirror of silence built up with perilous breath.
And in our conscience meeting her smile is on the terror
That chains us round with error and desperate fear of death;
Kind as a child's small hands her faithfulness is round us
With swift and fading gestures, wise as a child is wise;
Out of the gathering clouds that curtain and confound us,
Ecstasy and enchantment—sudden and swift, her eyes!

The hills shall lay away their sombreness unspoken,
The seas shall hush their murmur, the saddened wind be still,

When the long league of silence 'twixt earth and beast
    is broken
When at the end of all things the stones speak on the
    hill.
Then Calvary shall cry with glorious joy to heaven,
Aceldama be hearkened and purged by words aware,—
For that in days gone by her voice to His was given,
And to the joy of heaven her soul of passionate prayer.

VI

I listened to the wind who speaks of finding
Among the litter of his blown leaves of days
All rainbow gold of tears that are so blinding;
And then again he says
Something of glittering jewels in the haze,
Incense of praise, myrtles and bays for binding
The wounds that blossom blood upon his ways.

I listened to the sun who can recover
Miraculous instants of an earlier time
Surprise Her eyes alinger on her lover
And run like rhyme
On leaf and stream. He spoke of dream and clime
Sacred with everlasting Spring, ahover
With light more cadenced than bright bells in chime.

I listened to the earth and sea. Their voices,
Too mixed with men, came sombrer and more sad.
They droned awhile of all the tangled choices
That every man has had,
And moaned like ancients with mere age gone mad
And left me nothing that reasons or rejoices—
That seemed so reasonless in being glad.

I listened starward where the ghostly weaving
Of wandering lights is all of Heaven we know

And worlds are lamps and darkness comes bereaving
The world of ebb and flow,
And 'tis as if a bosom were heaving slow
With firmamental care,—ah, heaving, heaving
With an unfathomable earlier woe.

"Listener at many doors,—for what disaster?—"
Her spirit murmur crept into my ears.
"Brooder on pictures breathed on by the Master,
Listen at the heart that hears,—
Ah, listen softly, breathing low!" The years
Were not—for there She was—and, gazing past her,
I saw the Vision raised by blood and tears.

VII

For the eyes loved,
For the face lifted
In that still light,
Dark trees are groved,
The snow drifted,
And the mound white.

And the grave dug
And the words spoken
And the flowers shed—
And the eyes tearless
But the heart broken
For the brave dead.

Though a soul thrill
To the stars' fire
And a mind sing
To a keen will
Of a high desire
And a great thing,—

Ah, who listens?
Who—who hearkens
Or answer makes,—
Though the moon glistens
And the night darkens
And the heart breaks?

Lay her sword by her,
Her steel of spirit,
Her phantom blade,
Lest the loud liar
In his hell inherit
What her soul made!

Sweet sword, she came
To pierce and quicken
My heart to grace,—
Oh, white flame,
Oh, heart life-stricken,
Oh, deathless face!

VIII

Now the snow drives. The day
Goes on in whirling gray.
Still the world roars,
As if no striving flame
Had gone, as it suddenly came,
Passing blind doors;

As if no eyes, no smile,
No heart that could beguile
Evil from earth,
Had hovered just a space
To light one holy place
In the dark and the dearth.

Was it always as fierce and strange—
This blank and sudden change
Men have known ever?
This veil as hard and keen
As the blade of a guillotine
Flashing to sever?

Oh, ears that hark in the night,
Eyeballs that strain for sight,
Pulses that know
The same dull burning ache,
Though a man sleep, though he wake,—
Was it always so?

IX

True love runs wild and wildly understands.
I took the bread of Heaven once from your two hands.
And your eyes are upon me even as I sing,
Saying, "Be of comfort. Death is a little thing."

Oh, magic child and woman, who crept into my heart,
Who hold me with strong arms from all the world apart—
No, I will not say it—for your eyes grieve;
I will say you draw us all to Heaven—*your* Heaven, by your leave!

Lady Simplicitas, who hummed like any bee
Little quaint and olden rhymes to keep simplicity,
Lady of the downcast eyes and sudden starry mirth,
And eloquence by torchlight for the wronged of all the earth,

True love runs wild and wildly understands!
I took the wine of Heaven once from your two hands;
And when your eyes were darkened for the world's red smart
You made a violet twilight as you pressed against my heart.

For that coiled hair's brown crown, for that sweet and
seemly way,
The straight thoughts, the eager words, the dazzle of
your day,
Shall I turn base then and learn to whine and curse?
Not though daggers of memory flicker through this
verse!

For true love runs wild and wildly understands.
I took the sacrament of love from your two hands.
So shall I cross the sunset hill and climb the pasture bars
And meet you in our porch at last, in the Village of the
Stars.

X

One thing only I can say to you
Whatever be the things men do;
Let one love make May to you,
Hold one love true.
Who but hears the querulous
Sigh and the heavy groan,—
Yet stand for the one love perilous,
Though you stand alone.

Yes, and though beaten and beaten
By the ravings of the blood;
Though with dust and ashes eaten,
Be one thing understood.
The battle in the cloud overthrows you,
Your lips are dashed with foam,—
Yet the one love lives and knows you
And leads you home.

Home—ah, God!—to the slumber
At last and the waking peace,
Where wars without name or number
Give last release;
Where her whisper again is more to you
Than the angels' flaming wars,
And proud Death's hands can pour to you
The cold of the stars.

XI

The selfishness of grief! . . . and yet each turning
And questing after some new brave relief
Shows other steel stretched forth and on me burning
The selfishness of grief.

Till self who was my God and love, my chief,
Even these turn from my side with footsteps spurning
As, stooping low, I lift the heavy sheaf

Of our flowered hours gathered with our yearning,
Gathered so wildly in our happy fief
And glimmering beautiful beyond belief,
With dazing fragrance, till my dim discerning
Sees them the legend dropped for my unlearning
The selfishness of grief!

THE LONG ABSENCE

I

Accosted

"If you saw blue eyes that could light and darkle
With merriment or pain;
If you saw a face that was only heart-lonely
In the cities of the plain;
If you felt a kindness that was happy as the daybreak,
Patient as night,
And saw the eyes lift and—the dawn in May break,
You have seen her aright.

"Blue-cloaked archangel, rein your steed a little,
Though cities flame!
Messenger of night, though my words are brittle,
Though I know not your name,
Though your steed paw sparkles and your pinions quiver
With colors like the sea,
Tell me if you saw her, if you saw my love ever!
She is lost to me.

"That is why I walk this windy highway
And stop and hark
And peer through the moonlight—always my way!
And listen up the dark

And knuckle my forehead to remember her truly,
The very She;
And that is why I cling your rein unduly
To answer me!"

But the eyes were deep and dark, though somehow tender.
Haste was manifest
In the gauntlet, the greaves, the irid splendor
That pulsed on his breast.
He did not even gesture to the night grown holy,
But shook his rein
As his steed leapt forth; while I—turned slowly
To the cities of the plain.

II

The House at Evening

Across the school-ground it would start
To light my eyes, that yellow gleam,—
The window of the flaming heart,
The chimney of the tossing dream,
The scuffed and wooden porch of Heaven,
The voice that came like a caress,
The warm kind hands that once were given
My carelessness.

It was a house you would not think
Could hold such sacraments in things

Or give the wild heart meat and drink
Or give the stormy soul high wings
Or chime small voices to such mirth
Or crown the night with stars and flowers
Or make upon this quaking earth
Such steady hours.

Yet, that in storm it stood secure,
And in the cold was warm with love,
Shall its similitude endure
Past trophies that men weary of,
When two were out of fortune's reach,
Building great empires round a name
And ushering into casual speech
Dim worlds aflame.

III

For Thinking Evil

For thinking evil and planning shame
The fire licked upward—at first a name,
Then star-devouring rebellious flame.

The dread light lingered high on the sky.
It grew and reddened—a voiceless cry.
It spread and touched us, we knew not why.

And a man sat staring out to the night,
Through tender silence, in warm lamplight,
Thinking always, "The fire at height!"

That fire blowing with growing roar
Saw us going, closing the door;
Saw us parted—who meet no more.

For thinking evil—all men drawn
Against a devil that dusked the dawn.
Each to his station. All men gone.

Some for the hilltop, fire to its brow,—
Death, long torture,—some for the plough,—
Some for the silence—that I know now.

IV

Travel

You and I dreaming
Planned the far-away,
Cities and hedgerows,
Distant summer day,
When, the sun sinking,—
But oh, a distant sun!—
We would be thinking,
"Think what we have done!"

You and I whispering
Held the isles in fee
By a chain of grasses,
By your smile to me,

Visioning some clime—
But long years between—
When we should say, sometime,
"Think what we have seen!"

You and I wondering
Of our old age,
Turned a page pondering,
And turned a page . . .
Now, my hands pluck ravelled
Strands I can't untie.
Yet—you always travelled
Farther than I!

V

Her Way

You loved the hay in the meadow,
  Flowers at noon,
The high cloud's long shadow,
  Honey of June,
The flaming woodways tangled
  With Fall on the hill,
The towering night star-spangled
  And winter-still.

And you loved firelit faces,
  The hearth, the home,—
Your mind on golden traces,
  London or Rome,—

On quaintly-colored spaces
  Where heavens glow
With his quaint saints' embraces,—
  Angelico.

In cloister and highway
  (Gold of God's dust!)
And many an elfin byway
  You put your trust,—
A crock and a table,
  Love's end of day,
And light of a storied stable
  Where kings must pray.

Somewhere there is a village
  For you and me,
Hayfield, hearth and tillage,—
  Where can it be?
Prayers when birds awake,
  Daily bread,
Toil for His sunlit sake
  Who raised us dead.

With this in mind you moved
  Through love and pain.
Hard though the long road proved,
  You turned again
With a heart that knew its trust
  Not ill-bestowed.
With this you light the dust
  That clouds my road.

BY THE COUNSEL OF HER HANDS

"Propter veritatem, et mansuetudinem, et justitiam: et deducet te mirabiliter dextera tua. Alleluia."

With her clear eyes lifted,
Dreaming, lighting, swift and quelling
On all darkness drifted
From this earth, a vacant dwelling,—
With her haste flashing, flowing
Bright above all fear or scorning,—
I have seen my darling going
Up the mountains of the morning!

Oh, like harps wrung thrilling,
Like those viols that voice their answer
To the wild still willing
Of the heavens' necromancer,
From the flowers around her rises
Music—gold, more gold in glory—
First of all those pure surprises
At the ending of the story.

Through the trees she passes
Where the purple spreads in shadow,
Through the dew-bright grasses
Of that heaven-quiet meadow,
Up the way of climbing vines,

Never faltering, never failing,
Where the blue of heaven shines
Through the sun for only veiling.

Flowers and leaves together sing
Like those birds in clouds that choir.
Aching-sweet from silver string,
Purling flute and golden wire
Music flows no mortal knows
Even in April thronged with voices.
Deeper glory throbs and glows
Till the trembling air rejoices.

Sweet and deep, sweet and deep
In the heart dark and aching,
Glamorous waves across my sleep
Is that tide of splendor breaking.
Pure and high, pure and high,
Shaking every star to chiming,
Till the wonder-stricken sky
Thrills and trembles to the rhyming!

Seraphim and cherubim
On their wings' immaculate wonder
Rise in whirlwinds from the dim,
Pass through voids of rolling thunder,
Mount from lightning into light,
One great surge of praise awaking,
White and white into the height—
And the music trembling—breaking—!

But above the wood of fear,
On one white road forever,
From the darkness mounts my dear
In her still and bright endeavor,
With her kind brave eyes,
Honest hands and heart of healing,—
Lips that rapturously surmise—
Little smiles upon them stealing.

For—a violet twilight now
Spreads—as arms had cast a shadow
And the Godhead stooped to bow
Over phantom hill and meadow!
And—again—a field
Floats before her—as her choice is—
Where *her* heaven is revealed
In those small and rippling voices.

Elfin flowers invoked alive,
Fairy clouds from hives of honey
Like no angry human hive,
Billows of brightness swift and sunny,
Pattering, chuckling, panting haste,
Rosy-shy—though never sweeter
Than the three her arms embraced—
Heaven's children flock to meet her!

There are harps in Heaven
That must fail against that splendor;
And the Sacred Seven
Bow their heads in mute surrender.

Holy Mother of God, tonight
Bend your star-bright eyes and brimming
On the sweetness of that sight
In that meadow, dusk and dimming!

For, with hands in grasp so small
Of the tumbling ones that follow,—
With her smile upon them all,
Up the hill and through the hollow,—
With that rich voice crooning, waking
Sparkling gusts of joy and laughter,—
Climbs the Light of my forsaking,
Mounts the Hope of my hereafter!

Harshest song, bow down!
Mutinous words!—to make immortal
How the heavens in starlight drown
As she enters in the Portal,
How the Heavenly City glows,
How the bells cry, "We have found her!"
As through tears and praise she goes
With the children crowding round her!

STRENGTH BEYOND STRENGTH

"If thou hast run with the footmen and they have wearied thee, what wilt thou do with the horsemen?"

Breathless, beaten as with whips of wonder,
Scourged and naked to the flying sky,—
Yet have I heard the hoofs of thunder,
Seen the horsemen glimmering by.

Head back, teeth bared, eyes aglitter,
Questioning still the black reply,
Laboring stride and breath grown bitter—
Phantom horsemen swerving by!

Foot on the flint and burning, parching
Death at the throat, with gall to taste.
Rank on rank are the footmen marching,
Wave on wave do the footmen haste!

Past and past me toiled and slowing,
Gasping breathing and straining limb,—
Rank on rank are the footmen going
Forward to fog and the distance dim.

Sledge on the brain and huge hands crushing
Hard on my heart that they wring at will.
Wave on wave are the footmen rushing,
Surging in silence across the hill.

Sudden lit road they run together
Just as the cloven mist-wreaths close!
Each, each strives by a stirrup-leather
Where some glimmering horseman goes!

Iron in sinew, steel persuasion
Now of the weak and sobbing will;
Scorn that beats on the old evasion;
Limbs that move for the further hill.

Teeth clenched hard on an execration,
Chin sunk deep on a laboring chest—
Racing death with a revelation,
Dead and done with—but forging abreast,

Forging past them and past, and gaining
Once again to my hard-fought place.
Lord of Runners, requite my feigning!
Help me only to run this race!

Head-down, plunged through the roiling weather,
Flinging the sweat from a straining brow,—
Now, I run by your stirrup-leather.
Golden Horseman, I see you now!

QUE SAIS-JE?

If I could answer that sob of the brave little heart,
If I could answer that silence I suddenly fear,
If I could give him truth that would set this apart
From creeping question, my dear,

There would be ground for our feet, sky for our eyes,
At least, at worst. All I can whisper is dreams
And faith I hold, being doubtful of all things "wise"
And all the outrage that seems.

We are your boys to the end, that is all I know.
I the stronger as yet, but knowing no more
For all my years than I guessed at years ago
And searched through weary lore.

I thought they knew who were older and wiser than I.
I saw them confident, grave, with their answers swift.
Till I stood in turn at the edge of earth and sky
And saw the planets adrift,

And felt my heart struggling and striving for rest
And my baffled mind groping and yearning for peace
In some great answer or on some infinite breast
Of last complete release.

And now I turn his mind to fanciful things
And grip him close and hoarsely murmur my love

And pray away from him all this pain that clings
To this mind I am weary of.

Oh, I will teach him as best a man can teach
And strive to find him all knowledge of you I hold
And make you near to him even when out of reach
Of my treacherous heart and cold.

For though I cannot see there is more to be seen,
And what I cannot know is in presciences,
And all you are is as it has ever been
Between my heart and his.

EBB-TIDE

You who were never afraid of truth or doubt,
Only saying "The light in the soul is real,
The spirit of grace is true, the lamp is not put out."
I must follow forever your white ideal.

Splendor amid the smoke and the dust and vapor,
Truth through the litter of lies and rubble of dreams,
Mutable yet immutable; changed, and the shaper
Of all that light in the mind that steadily gleams!

So—words fail, and run to ironic length;
Like panting breath the phrases quiver and fade.
And the heart unthought-of throbs its appalling strength—
Tireless—till it too in the dust is laid.

But something lives—say there is something lives!
Our passion it is, all of our will to be—
Something in men like a rout of fugitives
Hurrying on the shore of a phantom sea,

Hurrying, wailing, questing, seeing the moon
Light that waste of beauty and terror and plangent sound;
Knowing the tide creeps on, and that soon, too soon,
All of the torches and all of the flowers lie drowned

Yet that that sea moves not of its movement only,
All of the dim vast force is motes that blend,
Each still striving and still secure and lonely
Unto some end, some great mysterious end.

You who were never afraid of truth or doubt—
Granted that truth we know!—oh, eyes of mine,
Eyes in my soul that will never glimmer out,—
This is my soul's ebb-tide, but I make the Sign!

COWARD

By her beauty stayed, by her love empowered,
(*Coward! Coward!*)
Take the honest light and pray for grace.
Where her lightning struck, where her pureness flowered,
(*Coward! Coward!*)
Dare to see her face.

Through the sea of lies—skies have always lowered!—
(*Coward! Coward!*)
Be she your horizon or your mist,
Make straight on, though dawn be still undowered,
(*Coward! Coward!*)
Toward the timeless tryst.

One thing now you know for truth at least,
One thing more than groan of witless beast,
One thing more than jest at mumming feast,
Pain is still increased, increased, increased
Marking life like milestones toward Love's East.

AQUILIFER

Ax and bundled rods let Cæsar's henchmen bear,
Down to the house of sods processional torchmen pass,—
When was your part with these, armed thought's aquilifer,
Turning with streaming standard where the barbarians mass!

Cæsar's screaming eagles black as Hell's vultures flew,
But birds went up our dawning splendid and wing and wing
And bright for the slaves and captives your fearless banner blew
And laughing-glad as a trumpet the faith you still could sing.

Old as the world is evil and disenchantment old.
Man's ancient heart is bitter, his hard eyes doubt of a sign.
Blown hair beneath that banner that floated in folds of gold,
In spirit I see you standing first in the battle-line.

Kind, and a girl, and little, but wiser than all their sneers;
Truer than their predictions, daring to be not base;

Daring to ride for the Captain who held through blood
and tears
Life well lost for justice and love acclaimed to the race.

Still with shifting and turning, with minds and the ways
of swine,
Earth is girded by Cæsar's men, life a stag in a snare,—
Yet still—your banner burning first in the battle-line,
Aye, and the trumpets blowing for dawning, Aquilifer!

THE WOMAN

You could hurt and you could heal,
You could hide and still reveal,
You were lilies, lilies and steel.

You the near and you the far
Were as lamplight and a star.

I cannot tell them what you were;
Yet, Death, you have not all of her.

No, I, the passionate nondescript,
Have wine your lips have never sipped,

Have wine of her in my heart's blood
Whom I never understood.

You were tender and benign,
Trusting—and all fire divine
And a constellation's sign.

You the far and you the near,
You heaven high and heaven here,
You the quest, and closest dear.

Ah, God, you have not all of her,
For still my cause she can prefer
Where she goes, and where You were.

You could weep and you could rise
With the Word clear in your eyes,
With a strength beyond the wise.

Girl and goddess, will and love,
Struggling, battling, winged above
Memories I have memory of!

PERVIGILIUM

Oh, not in words—for what are words to seeing;
Yet not in sight, for presence veils and hides;
Not even in sleep, though then the gates of being
Stand open to the large eternal tides;
Neither in memory, embers fading ashen;
Nor by the code, wherein the voice is dumb;
Nor wild still love, fluttered by veils of passion,
Rise summit by summit to Janiculum!

Think not to speak and tell the riddling purport;
Think not that sight of beauty caught the best;
Nor any dream furls its dim sails in her port;
Nor any memory makes her manifest;
Nor by a measure of days mete out her measure,
Nor through remembered poignance pluck her strings.
For she, like moonlight on some hidden treasure,
Steals glimmering down and renders vain these things.

Then I cried, "Love!"—but stars not even shrinking
Glittered the same and night remained the same.
Slowly I swam on dark tides of my thinking,
Yet like no moon she rose to hear her name.
I lay like sand unrimmed of sea and crisping
Under dead sunlight, parched as bleaching bone,
Till all seas shrank and dried, and the last lisping
Of beaded water vanished from the stone.

Then jagged lightning forked, the thunder shattered
Like stunning guns. Amain the trees were blown
And shrieked and writhed and whirled their branches tattered
Like patriarchs waking to some end long-known,—
All my heart's storm—assault and wild repulsion—
And hissing sand-coils swaying high and dim—
Flash blinding-bright! And through that last revulsion
I saw her passing on the desert's rim.

TIME WAS

Time was when you would enter
That door and I would be
No longer in the darkness
Upon the sea,
Sailing through lowering tempest
Of thoughts within the brain. . . .
If that could be so
Ever again. . . .

Time was when your slight gesture
Would bid the fairies dance
And make the world a twilight
Of woodland trance,
And wake old aching music
All honey through its pain. . . .
If that could be so
Ever again. . . .

Time was when I would flout you
With clever something said—
And could not live without you
When you turned your head.
With me you walked the sunlight,
With me you walked the rain. . . .
If that could be so
Ever again. . . .

THE MASTERS

Two with great hearts, deeply you proved them.
Laughing you loved them, childlike you said,
"Oh, but this is the part—!" Almost I reproved them
Drawing you from me, minds long dead.

Yet forever your voice, wraith that was rapture!
What great-souled spaces the while you read
Joy—pain—mirth—all I would capture,—
Dickens and Browning—your bended head . . .

Heaven of lamplight I long for lonely
Where all the folk of their fancy tread;
Three small faces, and mine,—and only
Dickens and Browning—your bended head!

WHEN

It is when the trees have such radiant flowers,
Such white and rosy showers,
Such fragrant whispering,—
It is when the sun lights such mellow, yellow hours,—
For lovers love the Spring!

It is when the moon is so pale and drifting,
Blossoms softly sifting
From the vines that climb and cling,
That my heart will stop to hear love's laughter lifting,—
For lovers love the Spring!

It is when the long evenings, their haze of violet wearing,
Hold the passing voices as on music's throbbing string,
By some vague open window I shall sit long staring,—
For lovers love the Spring!

CHILDREN

Children, we played at games—your laughter still is
round me.
Children, we called each other's names. I hid—you
found me.
Children, we went in search of death, and came back
often.
Children, we prayed with equal breath—*no time can
soften!*

Children, I loved your pretty looks, your eyebrow lifted.
Children, we wandered story-books and star-dust sifted.
Children, we plucked amazing flowers in a walled
garden.
Children, we dreamed through healing hours—*no time
can harden!*

THE RETREAT

Some sunny close hung high
In depths of sky,
Vivid presentment of your old desire;
No multitudes, but peace
And the release
From days and nights that are but pitch and fire.

Some simple garden, old
Gray walls that fold
Its fragrance in, and one slow softened bell;
The waited Face, the light
And inner sight
And the good voices that you heard so well.

There may you quaintly move,—
You whom I love,—
Sometimes, even now, and make retreat at last
With the truth known and rest
Made manifest
And all the meaning of the hurried past.

And may I find you there
When the still air
Holds yet the thrilling of His evening smile,
And stand within the gate
And watch and wait,
Till, from your prayer, you turn after a while

THE RETREAT

To see me stained and torn
And travel-worn
But yet with all my love of you held fast;
And wonder "Is it he?" and know it is—
All mysteries
Being outdone by this mysterious last.

And as the evening glows
In throbbing rose
May you lift your arms then, lift your head and cry
"Come!"—and yet sleep not wake
Nor dreaming break—
But light forever fold us, you and I.

SEALED

Man has been famed
Time out of mind
For having gone lamed
Or deaf or blind
Or weighted down
With loads that bind.

And eye and ear
Now curtained are
To see or hear
Rhyme in a star
Since you, my dear,
Have gone so far.

And limbs that go
And lips that speak
Are not to know
That which they seek. . . .
Does Time jest so
In a madman's freak?

No, Time jests not,
Nor have I guessed
What has overshot
All bitter jest
Since first Man got
Fate's manifest.

SEALED

Cold eyes averse
And stony brows
And the old curse
On Adam's house
Despite, my verse
This truth allows:

A clear light hidden,
A tower of air,
A voice unbidden,
A secret stair,
And dream long-chidden
That makes aware

Thought of a time—
Who shall say how?
Oh, burnished grime,
Star-studded plough,
Common coin of rhyme
Ringing golden now!

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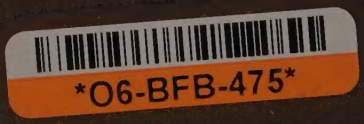
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